Dear Mary,

I remain the creature of habit and I continue unable to sleep as long as other do, I suppose because I am impelled to do as much of the work I have undertaken to do as will be possible. So, each morning I begin by brewing a pot of the kind of coffee I prefer, which takes about as much time and attention as the way you make New Orleans style, pouring the water in slowly. During these moments I have my thinking time, before I get to work. I may intend to put my mind to the work I am about to do but often it goes off on its own.

We were snowed in until yesterday afternoon, when a neighbor brought his snow blower. Generally being snowed in troubles me little, for I usually have all the needs for a while on hand and as long as we have electricity we have no serious problems. This time it has left me uneasy, unable to throw myself into work with the intensity of the past. So,during these beginning moments of the days, while Lil is still asleep and it is completely quiet, my mind has wandered. I guess that this began the early morning I heard of Garrison's defeat. Generally while I shave I listen to some all-news station. I was mildly surprised but I felt no other strong feeling. Too much happened to numb them.

But a strange thing happened. The day my mind went back to New Orleans, a mind down there turned to me. I got a card and a note from Orest.

Sometimes in these before-working moments I turn introspective. In fact, since the summer after I last saw you, I have been making a conscious effort to achieve a better understanding of my own mind and attitudes as well as those I know. I don't know how much understanding I have acquired but I do know that it has helped me subdue anger. I haven't lost my temper since. If I am by no means sure that this is a good thing, it is a fact. A month ago today I was in a TV studio with Mark and no blood, although he pulled his typical cheap falsifications. (I never have been able to understand why when in each case the truth would better serve his ends and falsehood serves us all ill.)

I had declined to go to Bud's affair twice and agreed to go finally only when he assured me there would be no nuts on the program, a promise he did not keep. So, I was in the hall only for the opening, not to give him and Falk and Mailer offense, and then was outside, visiting, except for the time I was on a panel. Even then I was out all the time Berkeley spoke, for I will not in any way associate myself with this insanities.

I had expected to see you there. When I did not and asked, all I heard is that you were ill. If anyone had details, I did not get them. I hope it is not a major illness.

For the rest, the affair was worse than the bad I expected, and I am without doubt that Bud and his people now see it the way I did before and during the fiasco. And where we had a chance for favorable press attention, we got attention to the nuts only. This kind of attention is never helpful and behind the scenes is always hurtful.

I suppose that having heard you were ill has had you on my mind, too. You and your family have had more than a fair share of the world's normal troubles. We began trying to understand these things with the Old Testament and still have not acquired understanding.

While I do not belong to any organized religion, including the one to which I was born, I do try to conduct myself in a manner compatible with the basic tenets of most of the better-known ones. Perhaps others may not consider that I either try or succeed. However, as I look back on as much of 60 years as I can remember, I can recall no single time when anyone said to my face that I had broken my word or had deliberately done anything to cause him hurt. I do try to be honorable and I do not think I am vindictive.

This, however, does not mean that I am emotionless and it certainly does not mean that I am not resentful when I am treated other than as I treat others. Lil says that I remain naive after all these years and experiences and despite a long history of abused trust, remain trusting. She may be right in finding my willingness to trust almost anyone a character flaw.

When my trust is abused, I react strongly. If I do not always express this resentment, I do feel it. It varies with the circumstances. Where the result is a special hurt to us, where it can be hurtful to Lil in particular, I react rather strongly. This is especially true when the result is, inevitably, extra, added problems and extra drains on time I want to spend as you know I spend my time.

You know something about the conditions of our lives. What you may not know is that

these conditions would not be harsh as they are except for the breaches of trust by others. We would not be in debt, for example, without this. Nor would we have had to lives as we have. Here it is not merely commercial crookedness, which one can expect, if not to the degree we have experienced it. (Example, there is no single major book wholesaler with whom we have dealt who did not owe me money by simply not paying his bills, no publisher with whom we have not had the same experience, despite dontracts with all.) It is that in each case those we regarded as friends were involved. This includes several lawyers. There is not in any case a question or right and wrong, for in each case where it has been possible for me to try to do something, I have been able to accomplish what I set out to do. When a layman can do it and an experienced lawyer can't, questions are obvious and an obvious answer is that the lawyer did less than he could have. The cost of undertaking these things is enormous in the time it takes and it comes from work I have every reason to believe nobody else is doing. However, in the two most recent cases I have been able to end up with 100% of what I asked for without going to court. Among the things this means is that I now have in my possession all the remaining copies of all my books, except for what may remain of 5,000 copies of Oswald in New Orleans that John Christian got and never paid for. In fact, he never paid for any he sold, and I know of some he sold. One of the side costs was the disappearance of more than 1,000 copies of Frame-Up before I could do anything to end their disappearance.

These many experiences have done much to condition me. They make me react as I do. I have thought of this often. If I am by no means certain that my conclusions are completely dispassionate, I have come to believe that in part the strength of these reactions is a quest for what self-respect I can preserve, having to live as I do. It is no fun being a pauper and it is less fun to be more pauperized by those who make needless problems.

In the ways that are possible, we type to cope. I suppose this is one way. In some ways we succeed. Despite the severity of the weather, during the past eight weeks our fuel-oil consumption has been but 153 gallons. We have not had the thermostat above 64, rarely have it that high, and turn the furnace off entirely when we go to bed. Even last night, with the farecast for about 10°. When I get up, 2-4 hours before I awaken Lil, I gradually bring the house temperature up to 62. When she is not home and there is a sun, often I turn the furnace off entirely. She has been working three days a week since the end of the last tax season. During this time I have been the housewife. And we have survived during this time on roughly a dollar a day for food. This includes having company.

So, where it is within out control, despite the erosion of years of this, we try and to a degree of which I am not ashamed, we succeed.

There is one of means well-known to you who has owed me for a month what I will have to give the bank in a few days. I have not received it nor have I been answered when I asked for it. Were you in my position, would this endear the person of means to you? I think not. This is not an exceptional case, however, and the endlessness of these kinds of things do condition us. Lil no longer hides her bitterness about them.

Anyway, this is not what I intended when I began. One of the things that has troubled me is your reaction. I have not understood it or its manifestations, one of which is not to express yourself. Another is not to return my things. You need not break your silence now, not am I again asking you to return what you clearly do not intend to. I am sorry about this more because of the regard and respect I had for you. Because of this regard and respect, I am more troubled on learning that in addition to more than a fair share of troubles you are also ill. I am sorry and I do hope it is not serious or lasting.

Looking back on a variety of disputes with a number of people my regret is that the disputes did not come earlier because we are better of for these ruptures. Where it has been possible to end them I have elected not to, for they were beneficial, not hurtful and because I see these people other than as I once did. You are an exception. In part this is because in your personal kindnesses you have been a rare exception among those I have known in this work and in part because of my respect for your inetlligence and perceptiveness and what they could have meant.

There is nothing we can do about the past and there is nothing I expect you to do about it. I write only to tell you that at this time of the year when it is perhaps more appropriate to think of others and the past, I have been thinking of you and your family as I have indicated and do hope that the future will be kinder to all of you. Sincerely,